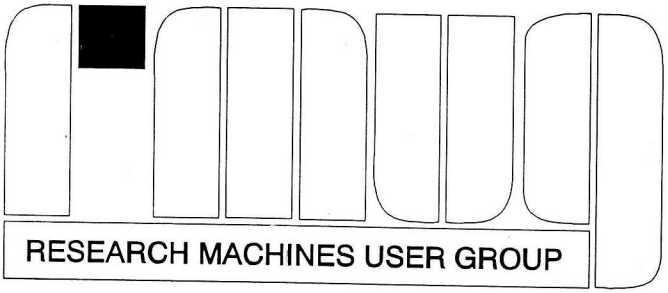
RM User

Volume 9:3
October 1994



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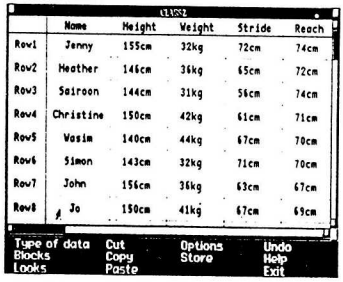

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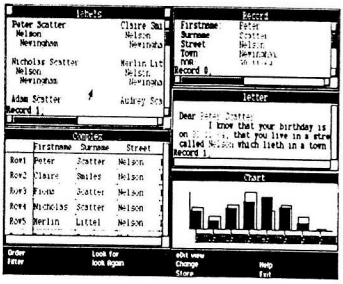

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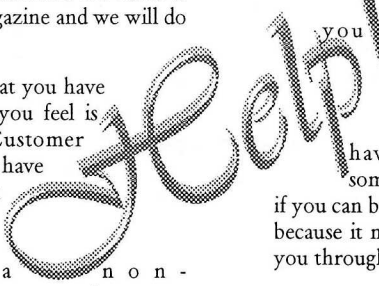
HelpLine

The User Group exists to help its members use the computers which they have.

The magazine is the main way in which we communicate with our members. If you find that it's not covering the areas you want to know about then phone someone listed at the back and let them know what you would like to see; the chances are that you won't be the only person who has the same needs.

Many of you (about 20%) are home users of Nimbus computers and we would like to help you. Do please phone any of the people whose numbers are listed at the back of the magazine and we will do our best to help.



You may find that you have a problem which you feel is too trivial for Customer Support or you may have a problem with which they can't help, perhaps because you have a non-standard setup for your equipment or you are using third-party equipment. This is the time when we may be able to help.

Remember that you can telephone the User Group members in the evening or at weekends when RM is shut (and, of course, you are just bound to hit problems). Also, RM don't claim to have great knowledge of products which they don't produce such as Excel or PageMaker. They can tell you how to install the packages on their equipment and how to get started but they cannot be expected to give you in depth support on using the packages. We, on the other hand, can. Most of the people whose phone numbers are listed at the back are using a range of software which is probably the same as yours on a daily basis. We may have met exactly the problem you have just encountered.

If you are in difficulty, please ring anybody on the Committee (numbers at the back) and you may also phone Tim Phillips on 0284 706623 (home number).

It is a great help if you are having a problem doing something using your computer if you can be next to it when you phone because it may then be possible to talk you through a solution over the phone.

If your problem is not urgent, or you think it may be difficult to explain over the phone, then do please write to the Editor with your query. I will either reply to you directly or pass your query on to a better person to solve it or publish your letter in the next magazine as a request for help.

The User Group is looking to restructure the support services we offer - should we distribute discs of worksheets produced by users? would you like the magazine to have a cover disc? would you prefer to receive the magazine on disc? Let the editor or one of the committee know your views.

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Deadlines for the next issues

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RM User 9:5 ..... 16 January 1995
RM User 9:6 ..... 6 March 1995

The date shown above is the ***latest*** date for copy for the magazine. You will normally receive the magazine about 2-3 weeks after the date shown.

Missing a Magazine?

Back issues of the magazine are available from the editor. Write to RMUG, 46 Ollgar Close, Shepherd's Bush, London, W12 0NG for more details. Please note that there were problems with issue 9:2 which means that there are no back copies of this magazine.

News and Editorial

It's a new term and that's always a busy time of the year. Amongst other things going on is the preparation for this year's Training Weekend. You should have received details of this by now but if not then there's a reminder of the basic information on page 23. As I write (September 25) there are still a few places left but they are filling up quickly. Phone Maureen Wernham if you would like more details.

Mouse mats are very necessary but never seem to last for long - either they get ripped up by little fingers or they mysteriously vanish. There seems to be two alternatives - either buy cheap mats which you can afford to lose or go for very heavy duty mats which won't get destroyed and make sure they are fixed in place. High quality mats are available from RM Direct! (advert in the centre pages); cheaper mats from a variety of sources. A company called Ras-Dex makes divers' suits and the offcuts from these make excellent fabric covered mats at about 40p each (they are also very brightly coloured - a chance to brighten up your computer room!). Contact them on 0115 9520019. I recently bought some hard plastic surfaced mats from GDE Computers; they're thinner than the ones that RM sell but they were also much cheaper - it's too early to say whether they'll last as well as the ones from RM. You can contact them at 8 Farnborough Close, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8UE (Tel/Fax 01622 729462 email gedy@cix.compulink.co.uk - note that you can send mail to this address via the Internet section of the RM Bulletin Board on 01235 826283).

If you were reading the above section carefully you'll have noticed that I've started using 11 digit phone numbers - they became available on August 1 and BT would quite like most customers to be using them by PhoneDay on 16 April 1995 (although there will be a transition period after that date). If you have a large database of phone numbers that needs updating then FixPhone for Windows may be what you need. It will work with DBF files as well as CSV or other ASCII files, searching for phone numbers and updating them to the new format. It has considerable "intelligence"; it can be told to scan free text such as the memo fields in dBASE and can also ignore fields which look like telephone numbers but aren't. It's at times like this that I'm glad I work in a London school; all the phone numbers in our pupil records database start with 071 or 081 so it's very easy to convert them but if you have more complex requirements then this may be what you need. FixPhone costs £50 from Subtle Software Tel: 01494 783229.

RM have now released their Geography courseware which includes 5 separate units of work at levels 3 to 8 of Key Stage 3 of the National Curriculum. It involves Excel, Word for Windows and Paintbrush and includes real statistical data for processing along with maps and diagrams. RM are now offering courseware with a 30 day money back guarantee which is most welcome - often something like this looks good but when you get it you find it simply doesn't suit your circumstances. It costs £199; more details from RM on 01235 826868

Anglia, the producers of the Key database software have recently released a new set of maps and some interesting clip art. There are four sets of maps including all parts of the British Isles (including large scale regional maps), the whole world and

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each continent, Australia and New Zealand. The maps cost just £22 for a site licence. There are also gazetteer datafiles which can be used alone or with the maps; the world gazetteer costs £22 and the UK towns, Australia and New Zealand files cost just £7.50, again including a site licence. The clip art files are all in Windows Metafile form (readable by PageMaker, Word for Windows and Micrografx Draw amongst others) and are topic based; Ancient Egypt, Britain 1750-1930, Farm Animals, Mediaeval Realms, The Greeks and World War II are just some of the titles. Each set costs just £12, again for a site licence.

The last new product from Anglia is a series of CD ROMs which also link in with Key. Counties of Britain contains detailed maps produced in association with Bartholomew and costs £40. It's possible to select features such as road types or contours or you can simply view the base map. Countries of the World also costs £40 and works in the same way; because both sets of maps link into Key it's possible to plot any data which you have collected on the relevant map. For all the Anglia products you should contact SCA (Anglia Television) at PO Box 18, Benfleet, Essex, SS7 1AZ Tel: 01268 755811.

Using word processing and desktop publishing it's possible to achieve some quite impressive work but sometimes a slightly better finish is needed especially if you want multiple copies involving colour. Paper Direct produce a range of special papers for all sorts of different jobs. For example, each year I give our new pupils a user identity and password and in the password I've given these out of sticky labels; it works but it doesn't look good. This year I had some small cards from Paper Direct (bought for another job but there were some left over). These have a nice coloured border, go easily through a laser printer and separate easily. I used Access to generate the layout but you could use almost any other program which can lay out labels (Word, for example) or you can buy software from them to do the job. The company also does heavy duty paper with coloured borders which is ready scored for easy folding. You can produce brochures or other leaflets very easily and make them look completely professional. Paper Direct are on 0800 833414 and they have a free catalogue listing their complete range.

I've mentioned Blackwell's Idealist program before - it's one of the few free text databases available at reasonable cost but I've just seen it in use at the Business Computing Show by a company called Business Consultants Bureau for storing information on a huge range of projects. I've also been sent details of a new version designed for client-server use on Windows NT. This may not be for everyone; Compact Information, who are using it for delivering journal articles, find that it's been possible to use Idealist on a server to replace juke boxes with 100 CD Drives for clients who found that these could not hold enough information! If you have a need to store free text (even in rather smaller quantities then this) then Idealist looks like a good idea. Blackwell Software are on 01865 206206.

As a long term user of Aldus PageMaker I've been following the merger of Aldus and Adobe with some interest, particularly as the Aldus name has now disappeared (the company is now called Adobe Systems Inc.) Aldus used to be based in Edinburgh and its good to see that Adobe Europe are using these premises as their head office. I just hope that development of Aldus products will not be stopped - although I quite like PageMaker there are quite a few things that I would like to see improved in

terms of user interface.

Type Twister is a program from Iona software which allows you to apply a huge range of effects (there are 50 provided and you can design your own) and colours (242 pre-defined and, again, you can add more) to text. It works with both Adobe Type 1 fonts and True Type fonts and can insert its results into your document either via OLE (like Word Art in Word for Windows) or by pasting through the clipboard. It has a recommened price of £29.75 and is available from major software dealers. It's produced by a company called Iona in Dublin and they tell me that if you order a network version then that's what you'll get but they didn't have a price available!

You may remember that SPC announced a while ago that they were stopping work on Superbase. The rights to the product have now been sold to a company simply called Superbase who have announced further work, leading to Superbase 3 in due course. I just hope that they are not using the product to maintain their mailing list - I've so far had 4 copies of the announcement!

I published a request for computers in Romania a while ago and I'm pleased to report an excellent response. So far 4 networks have been set up, (2 480z and 2 PC186) but now I'd like to ask for a few more items. Mice for the 480z are needed as is a Chain 64 server. If you are computer knowledgeable and would like to go there to help then this can also be organised; it's not quite a holiday and you need to meet the cost of getting there yourself but it really is worthwhile. If you can possibly help then contact Lesley Andrews on 01844 351153.

I mentioned Simnett's as a source of consumables and peripherals in the last issue but forgot to include a contact number! They are on 0181 982 6383. Remember that RM Direct! now also have a good range of consumables etc. They offer next day delivery with much lower carriage costs than some companies and competitive pricing on most items. See their advert in the centre pages for more information.

The Steam Computer Society is a group of users of obsolete computers and this now includes the 480z. They produce a magazine which is specific to the Tatung Einstein (another old CP/M machine) and have an extensive software library. More details are available from A E Adams, Ivy Cottage, Church Road, New Romney, Kent TN28 8TY. If you're interested in older computers then the All Micro Show takes place on Saturday 12 November from 10am to 4pm at the Staffordshire County Showground, Weston Road, Stafford (SCS is signed from junction 14 of the M6) Entry costs £2 and you can pay at the door.

Question Mark Computing have just released version 2 of Question Designer which adds a numeric question type to the explanation, multiple choice, text match, multiple response, push button and graphic hot spot types which were already there. There is also more flexibility in the format of the question - sub and superscripts are now available as is the ability to enhance single words by underlining or emboldening them.

Also from Question Mark is a guide to objective question design. When I took my PGCE I remember being given some guidelines on how to design a good objective test but the use of computers makes it easier to make such tests and makes it more important that they are of high quality and actually test what you intend to test. Better

Testing runs on any computer using Windows 3.1 but is intended to help designers of paper based tests as well as computer tests. It's available for £69 until the end of the year. More details on both products from Question Mark on 0171 2843999 or write to them at 41b Brecknock Road, London N7 0BT.

Scanners are one of those things that are great fun if you're a computer user and an absolute nightmare if you are trying to control disc space usage - an A4 scan in black and white takes up a Megabyte and grey scale or colour scans are even bigger. Having said that, though, they can be very useful for all sorts of work. Edhitec are now selling a true colour flatbed scanner (true colour means it can resolve up to 16.7 million colours!) which works at up to 1200 dots per inch. The scanner comes with OCR software (so you can scan a document and then convert the image to text) and an image processing program and Twain driver (which means that you can use the scanner with a huge range of other programs which support input from Twain devices). The best bit is the price - it's just £519. More details from Edhitec on 01423 871027 (fax and phone).

SPARRC (Software for Planning, Assessing, Recording and Reporting in the Classroom) is designed to do just that. It's designed for use by teachers who need to record the results of National Curriculum assessments and has been found by users to be extremely easy to use. It can accept input from SIMS, which saves retyping lists of names and forms, and can replace many of the rather less satisfactory aspects of the Assessment Module in SIMS. One of the interesting features is that the data disc produced is not machine dependent - if you have some odd Archimedes in the school as well as PCs then you can run SPARRC on both machines and simply use your data disc in whichever machine is available. Reporting is also extremely flexible - you can not only produce DfE standard reports but any others which are useful. If you have to record achievement for National Curriculum then this could well be what you need. SPARRC comes from Ernest Clarke Systems Ltd at 103 Philbeach Gardens, London, SW5 9FT Tel: 0171 912 0600.

If you work in a school you've probably come across the problem of pupils who print unnecessarily. There are also those who think that a laser printer is just a photocopier that doesn't have to be paid for. If you're running a Net LM 2 network then the StopIt software advertised on the back cover may be what you need. I hope to have a review of it in the next issue but in the meantime call Flo Computer Services on 0117 986 0885 for more details.

For those of us not using Net LM 2 one possibility is to use a cheap to run printer. I bought a Kyocera FS 1500 laser last September for my main computer room. In the past year it has printed 45,000 pages (most of which, sadly, seem to go straight in the bin next to it) but each one costs about 0.4p compared to an average of nearer 2p for a Hewlett Packard LaserJet. This means that I've "saved" £720. The printer cost about £1400 so at the end of its first year it's equivalent to having paid about £700 for an HP printer. If it lasts another year (and Kyocera rate them at about 300,000 copies) then it will have paid for itself in savings on consumables. The point I'm making is that although printing is always expensive it may well be sensible to look for a low running cost printer rather than a printer which has a low initial price. (I've also been very happy with the quality of print and the general robustness of the machine; it works well on the network - it's in a room with 25 computers so it's being used pretty heavily)

W(h)ither the User Group Software Library?

Glenn Taylor

Following the first post-AGM committee meeting I have agreed to administer the software library following Keith Whiddon's resignation from the post. There has not been a complete list of the library contents in recent years and so there will be many members who are unaware of what is available. The notes at the end of this article give a flavour of the software contained on the fifteen disks currently in the software library, each disk being available from me (details on inside back cover) at a cost of £1.50. Please contact me for more specific details of disk contents.

In some ways the Software Library is undergoing an identity crisis. Why does it exist? In the early days this was much easier to answer given the difficulties of finding software which would run on a PC186. Whilst many schools still use PC186 equipment, there has been a growth in schools' PC provision in recent years and newer hardware is being used to satisfy the demands of new, particularly Windows, software. Such software is readily available from high-street stores, software dealers and shareware marketers and it difficult to see how the Software Library can offer a real alternative to this multiplicity of software sources for someone looking for something for a specific purpose.

One way that the library could develop is as a vehicle for stopping the proliferation of 'wheelware' (ie. reducing the time spent by members in re-inventing the wheel). There must be many short programs, utilities, macros or whatever which members have cobbled together (or lovingly hand-crafted) to solve problems or difficulties which have arisen when dealing with a not unreasonable IT lesson or network situation. In fact, a number of existing library disks contain just this sort of thing. Perhaps you don't think that your solution would be of use to anyone else?

Another direction which the library may take is in the compilation of members' worksheets, lesson plans or ideas. As a secondary school teacher I am aware that it is not always easy to use a worksheet produced by someone else as it rarely *precisely* meets ones needs. Nevertheless, it is frequently useful to use such a worksheet as a starting point and then tailoring it to ones own requirements. Sometimes I am in need of ideas for project work in new areas (suggestions for KS4 Control & Measurement gratefully received!) and such a compilation may just help.

I would be extremely grateful to know what you think about these ideas, or to hear you own views about the future of the Software Library.

Library volumes available, September 1994.

Volume 1

- Turbo-Pascal V3 graphics library (plus examples) for PC186.
- Free-ware utilities from Centec.

Volume 2

- File archive utility (shareware).
- Menu-generating system.
- Quest to Grass datafile conversion.
- Set of utilities and libraries (mostly in Pascal) for various tasks eg. driving printers, providing help, communications, producing interactive batch files.

Volume 3

- Ourfacts: database creation and handling.

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- Expose: a cloze program similar in principle to 'Developing Tray'.

Volume 4

- Ezspell: Spelling checker which works on ASCII files.
- Microspell: another spelling checker for text files.
- MathText: Limited text editor with facilities for scientific/mathematical symbols etc.

Volume 5

- Various DOS utilities

Volume 6

- Census files in Quest & Grass format for Horton on the Bucks/Berks border. There are five files for the years 1841,1851,1861,1871,1881.

Volume 7

- A disk of libraries and programs written in Turbo-Pascal V3. Mainly DOS utilities but also covering diverse activities with some programs applicable to RM networks (not NetLM).

Volume 8

- A demo disk for Thinksheet (reviewed in RMUG magazine, Feb 1990).

Volume 9

- Three disk set comprising a limited early version of Word for Windows.

Volume 10

- Extensions to RM BASIC (ex RM Techpak 4).
- Graphics libraries for Aztec C and Turbo Pascal
- PC186 hard-drive cacheing utility.

Volume 11

- Print utilities (including large print, sideways printing, bar codes) for an Epson compatible printer.

Volume 12

This volume contains Techpaks 1, 2, 3, 4, 10

- Utilities for PC186 mode graphics (including Aztec C, Turbo-Pascal libraries)
- Prospero Fortran graphics library for PC186 mode.
- RM Fortran graphics library for PC186 mode
- RM BASIC extensions.
- Piconet support routines for BBC BASIC, Pascal.

Volume 13

This volume contains Techpaks 5, 7, 9, 16

- Utilities for Microsoft Word (DOS V3.1), Multiplan & Superfile
- PC186 general utilities.
- Russian characters for Microsoft Word (DOS).
- General DOS utilities.

Volume 14

- RM Net3.0 utilities (mentioned in RM User Vol 6:5).

Volume 15

- File compression software (PKZIP, LHA).
- Directory utilities.
- FILL: copy files from hard drive to floppy using minimum number of disks.
- SIMON: memory-resident text editor. Review copy only hence 'nagware'.

Wanted - An Editor for *RM User*

I've now been editing RM User since mid-1990 and the time has now come for me to retire and let someone else have a go.

Editing the magazine has been good fun (most of the time - there have been some hair rasing times when the machine loses all my work with less than 24 hours to go before it goes to the printer and I find that my backup file is somehow corrupt!) and in some ways I'm sorry to go but I'm finding that I don't have enough time now to do justice to the job.

The User Group owns a computer (with PageMaker 5 and Word for Windows) as well as a PostScript laser printer for the use of the Editor so you don't have to provide your own equipment for editing the magazine.In essence you need to have some DTP skills (but don't worry if you think that you may not know enough; I'm more than willing to offer some help) and a reasonable amount of knowledge about RM systems.

Each issue starts life as a collection of articles, mostly provided on disc by members, and I then place all these in PageMaker, add some bits of my own and print out camera ready copy ready for the printer. It normally takes me about a week of evenings plus a Sunday. If you're interested in editing the magazine and would like to know more then please contact me, Steve Rochford, to ask for more details.

Oh, finally, the Editor gets paid for each issue; currently at the rate of £275.

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Letter to the Editor

I have a technical query concerning Oriel with which I hope you might be able to help me- no-one else seems able to help!

I have a network version of Oriel (version 3.0p). It is running on Net LM version 1.2. We are using RM PC-486 machines and Hewlett Packard Laserjet 4M (PostScript laser) on the network. We are running Lan Spool.

The software seems to run quite well until we try and print. Any attempt at printing from Qwest or one of the charting utilities either results in the station crashing with a UAE (90% of the time) or it prints perhaps once and then UAEs. If it does print then any subsequent attempts to print from other applications, even well behaved ones like Word, result in "there is a problem with the printer" messages. The machine has to be re-booted to overcome the problem.

I phoned the Advisory Unit in Hatfield and they recognised the problem but I was told that the programmer was no longer available and that nothing could be done!

I actually quite like the software and have spent some time writing worksheets based on its use so I am a little unwilling to abandon it, but it is causing much frustration amongst our students.

It's possible to paste into Word using Courier 10pt or similar but it still causes problems and is not straight forward.

Have you any solutions, please?

Jeremy Matthews, IT Co-ordinator, Frome Community College, Bath Road, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2HQ Tel: 01373 465353.

I've got no immediate solutions. An Unrecoverable Application Error is caused when a program tries to access memory which does not 'belong' to it - Windows traps this and generates a generally fatal error. My suggestions that follow are not necessarily going to help Jeremy but may help you if you're having UAEs with other software.

Firstly, if at all possible, you should upgrade to Windows 3.1. This handles memory much better than 3.0 and although General Protection Faults sometimes occur they generally do not destroy other applications or Windows. I know that this is only possible by moving to Net LM 2 (and the cost of this may be prohibitive!) but if you have a standalone computer still with Windows 3.0 then you really should upgrade.

Running a DOS program and then returning to Windows may also cause problems - many DOS programs grab memory which Windows needs and don't release it properly. If you can avoid using any DOS applications (or reboot the machine after using them) then this can help.

Getting rid of other programs which are running at the same time is also a good idea. If you don't need Netpopup and messenger then it's well worth losing them - they are memory hungry and also can cause problems occasionally.

Finally it sometimes help to use the default Windows VGA driver instead of the SVGA driver - this isn't a perfect solution but it might be worth trying; if it fixes the problem then you know not to blame Oriel.

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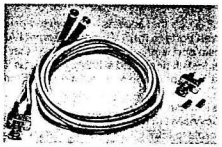

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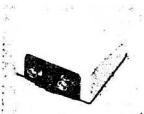

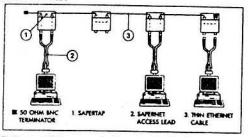

The Safertap™ is especially suitable in Education environments where inquisitive minds (and fingers) may wish to explore the hidden reaches at the back o a PC. If the network connectors are removed, then the rest of the network will still function as intended, reducing downtime and lost work.

£19.95

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NP08	Ethernet cable lightning surge suppressor	£59.00
UPS400	Uninterruptible 400W Power supply	£169.00

New **MCB Pool utility for RM Net LM.** This invaluable utility allows users on Net LM to transfer files to others with the minimum of fuss and delay. Especially useful for teachers to distribute files to a class of users. Only £19.95.

Post or FAX the slip below for further details

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Leap Up And Down (Wave Your Samples In The Air)

Martin Smith

Frivolity Warning: Reading the following article may have little educational value and will not enhance your pupils' National Curriculum levels or improve your network management skills, it may be fun! And the salary is too low to leave fun out of education, whatever J.Patten (this may be a historical reference by the time this article is printed) or SCAA may decide.

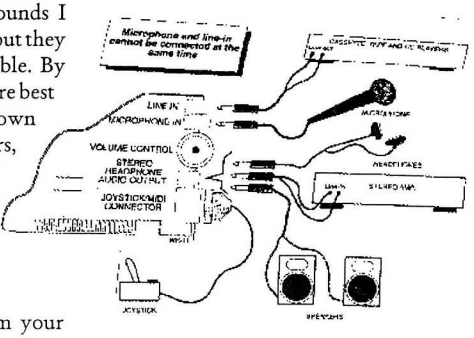
WAV files, WAV files everywhere, but very little Brit.

WAV files are samples of audio which can be played from Windows 3.1 using the Sound Recorder applet supplied with Windows 3.1. If you are a shareware junkie then you will know that a huge amount of WAV files from Star Trek, Star Wars, Wayne's World, Ren and Stimpy, Bart Simpson Fred Flintstone etc. are available. Good sources are Omicron Systems for floppy disks, the Minerva series of CD-ROMs and the RM Bulletin Board. Now, I enjoy Star Trek and Fred Flintstone but my cultural history is Fireball XL5, Val Singleton on Blue Peter and Doctor Who. These are the sounds I wanted to hear on my computer, but they do not seem to be generally available. By the way I suggest that WAV files are best enjoyed in the privacy of your own home, or at least after school hours, the concept of a room full of network stations all 'Yabbadabbadoo'-ing is horrendous. So if you want a job doing do it yourself...

WAV files can be played from your computer's internal speaker if you have the Microsoft speaker driver (available from Omicron and probably the RM Bulletin Board), but sound much better from a sound card such as a Sound Blaster. You definitely need a card such as a Sound Blaster if you wish to make your own samples.

I use a Sound Blaster II which I bought about a year ago and which is now available for under £50. This is still the model which seems to offer best compatibility with the majority of current games, but it does not have a full midi or CD-ROM interface, more advanced models are widely available, the Sound Blaster Pro looks like a good bet. The Sound Blaster also comes with a useful range of software which is certainly suitable for producing fun clips to adorn your desk top but would probably not be sufficient for professional musicians.

To sample files you need to be able to connect some sort of audio machine, I have used a portable CD player and my Hi-fi's amp as sources. A visit to Tandy or similar should provide a suitable lead for under a fiver.



Connecting external devices to Sound Blaster card.

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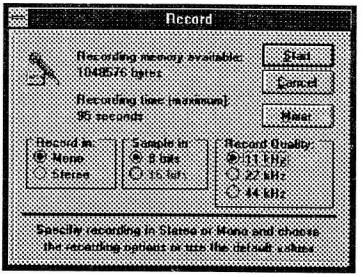
Until recently I was limited to sampling materials from CD and audio tapes, however the acquisition of a NICAM video recorder, which I have linked to my hi-fi, (more visits to Tandy, lift carpets to lay leads, try to pacify wife when carpet won't go back properly), means that I can tape from any TV programme or Video tape to a standard audio cassette and thence to the Sound Blaster. It would be technically possible, if I really wanted to annoy my long-suffering wife, to link the NICAM video directly to the computer. For the sake of domestic harmony using the audio tape is a more viable solution and seems to produce acceptable results. An incidental, non-computer related, advantage of a NICAM video is that you can use it as a digital hi-fi device and record 8 hours of digital sound on a standard VHS 240 thus removing the need for DCC, DAT etc. for recording digital sound. Back to the main plot.

As a confirmed Dr Who fan and the owner of a disgracefully large CD collection I had plenty of raw material to play with. The difficulty is selecting exactly which 4 or 5 seconds to sample and restraining yourself from filling your hard disk with a digital recording of the whole of Layla. I have put various files I have sampled on to the RM Bulletin Board, they are also available to readers of this magazine for a small donation to a charity such as Oxfam, National Children's Home or Cancer Research.

There follows a short master class in producing a WAV file of the 'do-da-dos' from Lou Reed's 'Walk On The Wild Side'

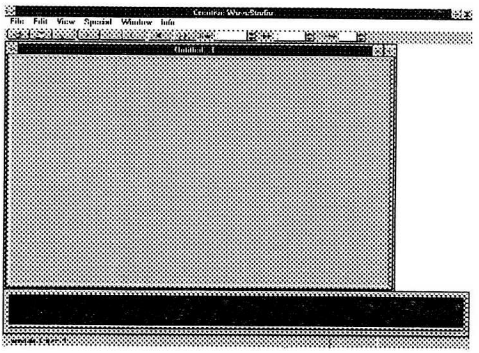
First load SoundBlaster's Wave Studio. This looks similar enough to a tape recorder to be reasonably intuitive.

Now select your sound source: tape, CD, vinyl, whatever and cue it to shortly before the extract you want. Don't be too precise as there is a slight delay between you pressing the start button and the recording starting. Press the red record button



You now have some decisions to make. I always sample using mono, 8 bits, 11 kHz. Mono because these files take half the disk space of stereo files and a dalek's 'exterminate' gains little in stereo. 8 bits because I have an 8 bit card. 11 kHz because this works best for me, I don't know why, in theory 44kHz should be best I think but I often have problems at anything other than 11kHz.

1 second of sound using my settings takes about 10kB of disk space.



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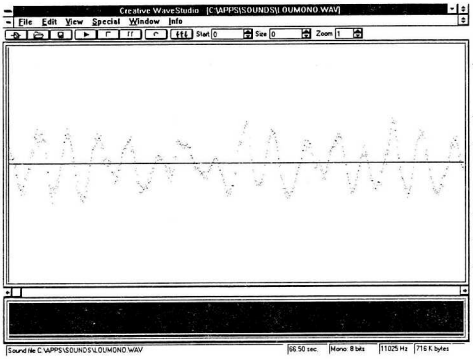
Press Start and then set the music/ sound playing. You will see a running display of time remaining and size of file. Once you have finished press Stop (astounding!).

Save the file under a temporary name, you will probably have several working files before achieving the finished product. Don't forget to delete them when you have finished as these files consume disk space hungrily.

There follows a screen shot of the final minute of 'Walk On the Wild Side'



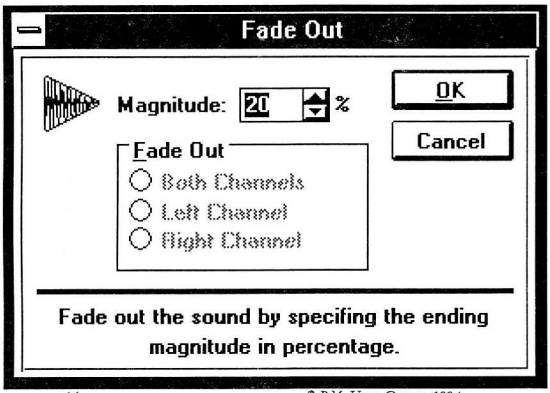
Now play the file and note where the section you want appears in the lower display.

Use the usual Windows techniques to select this section and copy it to a new file., Play the new selection and further refine your choice. As you make each selection it is easier to be precise. I normally take three or four selections to get my final version. Sometimes taking two or three goes at each selection. If you COPY and paste rather than CUT and paste you can always go back to an earlier version.

At this stage your sample probably stops and starts abruptly. You can use the Special effects to fade the selection in and out. Use the lower display to select the appropriate selection to fade and then select from the Special menu. I have encountered two minor annoying problems. You fade a section , having done this you select play but only hear a bleep. What has gone wrong? You are only hearing the faded section, use the mouse to click outside the selection before choosing play. Often when you fade out the final section there is still a short burst of noise at the end.

Use the upper display to select the very end of the extract and delete the area of 'noise'. Now save your final version and delete all temporary working files.

Once you have got your WAV files you can use them in a variety of ways with different packages, using OLE techniques. The only limit is your imagination.



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An interesting shareware package is 'Whoop It Up' which allows you to attach sounds to events. For example when Windows starts and stops on my machine The Beatles sing an appropriate extract from 'Hello Goodbye', when an application closes a dalek 'exterminates'.

Over to you, if you do create or sample any original WAV files why not share them with the rest of us. Put them on the RM Bulletin Board and soon the number of files with a British flavour will rival the number of Simpson, TNG, and Ren and Stimpy files.

Omicron Systems:, 0792 710391: set of 5 HD disks of .WAV files for £18, Whoop-It-Up £3, Microsoft speaker driver £3.

Linefeed, 071 474 1765: Minerva III (£13.50), Minerva IV (£13.50), Minerva V (£16.50):

Research Machines Bulletin Board 0235 826283: lots of interesting stuff.

First Computer Centre, 0532 319444: Sound Blaster II, £43 + VAT; Sound Blaster Pro £8 + VAT

If you would like copies of extracts from Doctor Who, Fireball XL5, Thunderbirds, Blue Peter etc. as well as various Rock classics then please send a donation to a suitable charity and a SAE and a formatted 3.5", HD disk to : Martin Smith, 3 Fernleigh, Sterling Road, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4PT. No SAE, no formatted disk, no WAV files!

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Crosstab Reports in Excel and Access

Steve Rochford

This is the time of year when our Geography pupils go out onto the streets of London armed with clipboards, ready to survey members of the public on a whole range of subjects. They then come back to school with masses of data and we have to try and find good ways of analysing it. This year I've discovered Crosstabs. They're quite easy to use and are great for summarising questionnaire data. Access can also do crosstabs (as queries) and I've been using those to analyse the results data distributed by the exam boards.

Excel

For example, we have a number of pupils carrying out comparative surveys - looking at the facilities offered by a local shop compared to a major supermarket or a small swimming pool compared to a large sports centre. One of the hypotheses put forward at the start is that people will travel further to the bigger facility. At the end of the survey there are perhaps 50 sets of responses from each centre which need to be analysed. They might be entered in Excel something like table 1:

Shop	Distance Travelled
KwikSave	0.2
Tesco	1.3
KwikSave	1.0
KwikSave	0.8
Tesco	1.5
etc.	

Table 1

It's quite possible to use Excel to sort the data on the shop name and then on the distance to give something like table 2 and you can then group the data by hand. Using a crosstab does all this for you and gives you data ready to graph in just a few minutes.

Shop	Distance Travelled
KwikSave	0.2
KwikSave	0.8
KwikSave	1.0
Tesco	1.3
Tesco	1.5
etc.	

Table 2

Having entered all the data in the format shown in table 1 you need to highlight it and then choose Data Set Database from the menu.

Now select Data Crosstab and wait a short time while the data is analysed. Choose to create a new crosstab and then from the next dialogue box add Shop as a row category. Move on to the next screen to add Distance as a column Category and then click on Options. Choose to show the data in groups of 0.5, starting from 0 and ending at (Auto) (At this point you can choose various grouping options; it makes sense for this dataset to count the data in half-mile intervals but you could choose any interval or count individual occurrences).

Count of Distance	Distance					
Shop	0 to 0.5	0.5 to 1	1 to 1.5	1.5 to 2	2 thru 2.5	Grand total
KwikSave	5	4	6	5	1	21
Tesco	0	2	6	9	4	21
Grand total	5	6	12	14	5	42

Table 3

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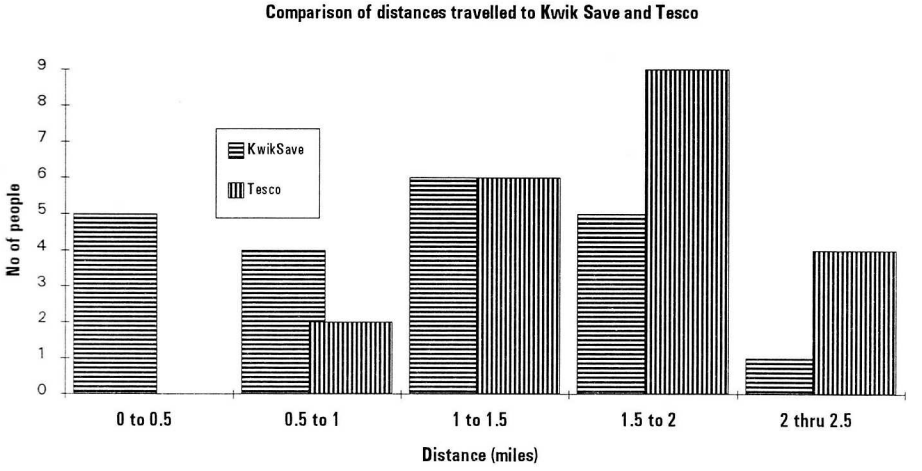
Move to the next screen and add Distance as the field from which to calculate values and set the options so that the calculation method is count (ie you want Excel to count how many people travelled less than 0.5 miles, 0.5 - 1 mile etc. rather than the total distance travelled by the people). Now create the crosstab to get a table like Table 3 created in a new worksheet.

Highlighting the data from A2 to F4 and charting it gives a chart like this:



Access Crosstabs

This year, for the first time, we used EDI both to send our exam entries and receive results. Actually downloading them from Dialplus is a story in itself, involving many hours of wasted time, but once we'd got them everything else was very straight forward and definitely makes the process worthwhile. If you've not seen the results files then what you get looks like a string of numbers; each result comprises a candidate number, a subject number and then a grade. Splitting this up into separate fields was fairly easy using a bit of Access

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Basic (although it could probably have been done using the data parse command in Excel) and so I quite quickly got some useable results. Earlier on I'd imported a list of candidates into Access so that I could link the candidate number to a name and I'd created a similar table of syllabus codes and subject names. It was then quite easy to design a query involving all three tables which would give me, for example, an alphabetical list of candidates with all their grades or a list sorted in subject order.

What was wanted, however, was something like the broadsheet each board provides but including the results for each board and this, of course, is a crosstab. (I say "of course" because I've now done it. Two months ago I hadn't got a clue what a crosstab was - now I've found out I'm convinced that they are the solution to everything!) Using the query created from the Syllabus, Candidate and Results tables I created a new query, this time a crosstab. The row headings were candidate names, the column headings were subject names and the values to go in each row were grades. Once you've designed the query it takes Access a short time (30 seconds or so on an 486 with 8Mb of RAM, 5 minutes on a 386 with 4Mb!) to generate the table but you've then got something which can be copied to the clipboard and pasted into Excel for final tidying up. (I use Excel because I want to put the subject names vertically so that they take up less space and Access won't let you do this).

If you've never done much work with databases because they are too difficult then it really is worth taking a look at Access. It does need at least a 386 and preferably a 486 (although a 386 with 8Mb of memory is better than a 486 with 4Mb) but if you've got such a computer then Access is amazingly easy to use to find out what you want from large quantities of data.

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Training Weekend 1994

The 17th Annual Training Weekend will be held this year at the Novotel Nottingham, from 6pm on Friday 21st October until the afternoon of Sunday 23rd October 1994. A full and varied training programme has been designed for those using either standalone or networked computers and it will suit users at all levels of experience from novice to manager, irrespective of the educational key stage at which they work.

The weekend will also provide ample opportunities to meet other users, and to share examples of good practice and solutions to common problems in relaxed and comfortable surroundings.

The weekend is split into three 3 hour sessions (Saturday morning/afternoon and Sunday morning) and a 1¼ hour session on Saturday evening.

Saturday morning:

- ⌘ Word for Windows
- ⌘ Database Design (not software specific)
- ⌘ Desktop Publishing with Microsoft Publisher
- ⌘ Microsoft at Home (a presentation by Microsoft)

Saturday afternoon:

- ⌘ Access
- ⌘ RM Net LM workshop
- ⌘ Window Box
- ⌘ Multi-media and CD ROM 2 parts - how to make a living from multi-media and a presentation on some of the best current titles

Saturday evening

- ⌘ Graphics - getting the best from presentation software; design tips
- ⌘ Cabling - some guidance from RM
- ⌘ Information Workshop

RMUG Software Library

Sunday morning:

- ⌘ Excel
- ⌘ Hardware Surgerey - a chance to discuss problems with some experienced users
- ⌘ Control - Economatics will demonstrate some effective solutions to teaching control technology
- ⌘ Access in Action - Castle Barnard School use Access to record and analyse grades throughout the school (and have involved *all* staff in the process)

Value for money is excellent and the cost is unchanged from last year. The rate for the weekend, inclusive of training, course notes and materials, certificate, single room accommodation with en suite bathroom and meals, is only £225 for RMUG members or £245 for non-members (inclusive of a year's RMUG membership). Places for day delegates (non-residential) at £75/£95 are also available, full details on request.

Now is the time to reserve your place!

Please make your cheque for £225 payable to *RMUG Training Weekend* and send it with your name, address and telephone number to: RMUG Training Weekend, FREEPOST, Esher Surrey, KT10 0BR

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"Any one Can Log-on"

John Williams

I followed the discussions on public or any-one logons with interest as I was developing the same thing myself. Having seized upon Alastair Bloundele's suggestion of reading NETLIST.INI this is the MTSL that I produced.

```
rem NO-ID Logon program
rem John Williams 12-9-
 94 inc. ideas from
 Alastair Bloundele
md t:\NO-ID.001
do netconnect o:
 \\serverx1\rmboot
getini o:\netlist.ini
 [%netaddr%] SERVER1
set tserv=%getini%
getini o:\netlist.ini
 [%netaddr%] SHARE1
set tshare=%getini%
do netdisconnect n:
do netconnect n:
 %tserv%\%tshare%
do netdisconnect o:
cd n:\NO-ID.001
rem comment out next
 line for NetLM 1.x
msgbox /!O Use a floppy
 disk if you want to
 keep work.
rem include next line
 for NetLM 1.x
rem echo Use a floppy
 disk if you want to
 keep work.
```

If your PDC is not called SERVERX1 then you will need to change it in the script, otherwise it should work on any network. The user I set up is called NO-ID and everyone knows the password. The user is also allowed multiple logons. The MTSL is saved in U:\W31 (NetLM 2.0 - use U:\W30 for Net LM 1.x), on each server and is entered as a Log-on program for the user.

One of the set commands is probably superfluous but you can put that down to my programming style. I added the commands to make a directory on drive T: with the same name as the user's home directory, and to change to that directory after N: has been reconnected. These ensure that applications like Winword and Access see the correct path for their INI files. If you give your user a different name you will need to alter these.

John mentions that the password for his "no-id" user is known; you might think that there is no point in having a password but I have found in the past that if you specify that a password is not needed then it does not stop someone from setting a password and this will then prevent other users from logging on. By setting a simple password but denying the user the right to change the password you make the user ID readily accessible and keep it that way!

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Hints and Tips

Troubleshooting

Yesterday I started getting some very strange problems with one of my M-Series machines. In the end I found that I had a faulty memory card; what follows is a description of the steps I went through in an attempt to locate the fault. Whenever something goes wrong the most important thing to do is to work logically - I didn't always manage this but I did try!

The machine was a network station and wasn't booting up properly. This is often a sign of a cable fault and although I couldn't think of anything that would have caused the cable to fail the first thing to try was to plug the machine into a different outlet (our network is cabled with a set of sockets that the machines plug into via flyleads). This made no difference so I swapped the flylead for one on a good machine. This also made no difference (and, importantly, did not cause the other machine to fail) so I was now pretty certain that the cable was good. When a Net LM station boots it reads various bits of information from a file on the server. It's possible for this to get messed up so I then completely deleted the information for this station and attempted to re-register it.

Time to think again

It still wouldn't start properly so I was now pretty sure that there was nothing wrong with the network side and the fault must be in the machine. It's possible for a machine to show odd faults if the MCA cards do not have their earthing screws tightened - I tightened the screws but still no joy. Now it was time to take the top off and see if anything was loose (there was no reason why anything should be loose - the machine hadn't been moved more than a couple of inches for about 2 years but you never know!). I took out the network card and scanner card, blew away the dust and carefully refitted both boards. (If ever you do want to remove boards from a computer you should follow static precautions - make sure that you are properly earthed throughout the process).

Still no luck - perhaps one of the cards was faulty and somehow interfering with the boot process. I couldn't sensibly take out the network card (the machine is discless) so I took out the scanner card and restarted the machine. MCA machines "know" when you have removed a card so it complained about this and told me to run setup. It still wouldn't boot properly, however, so it looked as if the scanner card hadn't been the problem. The only other thing that I could remove was the memory expansion card. With this out the machine booted immediately and loaded Windows perfectly.

I now felt fairly certain that there was something wrong with the memory card; occasionally the contacts get dirty and so an intermittent contact is made. I tried gently cleaning the edge connections and refitting the card. The machine failed to start after this - the card was looking very suspicious by now. The final test at this point is to take a known-good machine and try the suspect component in it. I had a standalone M-Series machine to hand so I took the memory card out of that machine and fitted my suspect card. Immediately on booting it gave an error message; that machine has been upgraded to DOS 6.2 and this version of himem.sys does much

more thorough memory checking and was finding a dodgy chip. Fitting the memory card from the good machine in the previously faulty machine had no effect - it worked perfectly - giving me total confirmation that the problem was with the memory card. Now it was time to phone RM and arrange for a repair to the card.

Interrupts

Looking backwards it's easy to say that the PC design was not very good but unfortunately we are stuck with all sorts of ideas which seemed good at the time - one of these is the way interrupts are handled. Interrupts are hardware signals made, for example, by a serial port when a packet of data arrives or by a printer port to say that it needs more data. The trouble is that there are not enough "IRQs" available for every possible device (when an interrupt takes place the hardware makes a signal to the processor using an Interrupt Request; the number of the IRQ identifies which device needs to be serviced) and so there are lots of things that might use IRQ 3, for example. When someone talks about an "interrupt conflict" they mean that two devices have been fitted to a computer which are both trying to use the same IRQ. This means that when the serial port has a byte of data ready, for example, it may be using the same signal as the CD ROM card and the computer doesn't know what to do. It's not normally a major problem as long as you know what devices use what interrupt and remember not to use the same one twice.

Our exams officer has a computer which has 2 serial ports (like most modern computers). The COM 1 port has a mouse plugged into it and the COM 2 has a modem which he uses to send exam entries and receive results. Everything was working fine until I wanted to add a network card. I took a standard RM Network card, fitted it and tested it - no problem. The machine accessed the network happily and everything seemed to work well until this week when he came to send off the January entries. Examlink said "no modem" and wouldn't dial the number. Panic time! The modem seemed fine - I could use it on another computer - and then I remembered the network card. The default setting on the old style RM cards was to use IRQ 3; no problem on an AX or VX because they only have 1 serial port. On an S-Series machine, however, COM 2 is also configured to use IRQ 3 and the dreaded conflict occurs. Once I'd realised that it was a five minute job to move a jumper to set the card for IRQ 10 and then everything worked again. The moral of the story (like the last one!) is that whatever you do with a computer should be done logically and carefully if you are to have any chance of it working.

Big Hard Discs

What seemed like an enormous hard disc when you bought the computer 12 months ago is now getting horribly full up. There are two options available - buy a bigger hard disc or run compression software like Double Space or Stacker. (Actually there's a third - go into Windows File Manager and delete all the odd directories of bits of software you installed "just to have a look"; you might be amazed at how much garbage you can clear out!) Fitting a new hard disc is actually quite easy provided that you don't mind taking the top off your computer. I hope to have an article in the next issue giving more details but if you can't wait then do remember that RM Services can do the job for you.

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RM Net LM - Hints and Tips

Backup Routines

Backing up is one of those things that everyone knows they should do but not everyone does. If you have a Net LM server then it will be fitted with a DAT drive and has Sytos Plus software to do the actual backup. There are two main reasons why you back up - in case you need to get back a file that's somehow gone missing or got damaged or if there's a catastrophe and you need to restore the entire server. Taking a full backup every day allows you to do both but be warned that with the DAT drives fitted to the early SystemBase servers it can take a long time to find a file (the worst case for me has been well over an hour).

Having made a backup you need to decide how long you should keep it. For example, you could just leave one tape in the drive and let it be over-written every night. This is not satisfactory because if you create an important file on Monday and then realise on Wednesday that you accidentally deleted it then you can't get it back because Tuesday night's backup will have over-written Monday's which contained the file. If you have 10 tapes then you could use a tape everyday for a fortnight (assuming you don't back up on Saturday or Sunday). This seems a much better idea until you delete a file and don't realise for a couple of weeks that you've done so (or, worse, a file becomes corrupted and you don't find out until you go to use it.) This is where you need a better routine.

Take 10 tapes and label them Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, Day 4, Week 1, Week 2, Week 3, Month 1, Month 2 and Month 3. Each week you use the Day 1 to Day 4 tapes for Monday to Thursday but on Friday you use firstly the Week 1 tape, then Week 2, Week 3 and Month 1. At the end of the next week you go back to Week 1, Week 2, Week 3 and then Month 2. The next month the patter repeats but finishes with the Month 3 tape.

You're obviously not keeping all changes made for the complete 3 months but there's a chance that you'll have a tape with the file(s) that you need if you use a system like this. Perhaps more importantly if you ever find that you've got a virus that's been there "dormant" for some weeks then you can go back to a good tape from perhaps two months ago and recreate the server.

The other way of working is to only back up users' files every day and then back up the whole server perhaps once a month. If you do this then you should be aware of the files that might need to be restored other than users' files. I would definitely backup the whole of c:\lanman\accounts - this contains the list of users and their permissions as well as the printer information files (provided that you have run PQINFO; you have run it since you last changed the printers, haven't you?). Other areas that might be worth backing up are p:\progman, p:\appstart and any files which you have added to u:\w30\rmwin (alterations to default.wni, for example). An absolutely essential file is O:\NETLIST.INI - this is the text copy of the station database; if you lose this then you will have to re-register all your stations which is tedious to say the least!

It would be possible to write a batch file to copy all the files which you want to keep to a sub-directory of the admin user area then if you back up all user files (ie c:\lanman\rmnet\users and everything below it) you will get these files. Remember that a batch file for OS/2 has the extension .CMD and if you want to run it with an AT

command then you must either put it in c:\lanman\netprog or specify the full directory to it.

Disc Space

At one of the support seminars we were told that you really shouldn't run a server with less than 100Mb free. At the time I felt that that seemed an outrageous amount of space - surely the server can't need that much spare space? This term I've managed to have at least 50Mb free all the time (and, when I do some judicious tidying up I get 80-90Mb free). I've also had no server crashes for over 2 weeks whereas last term I was lucky to go more than 2 days without the boot service failing on the PDC. It's early days to say that there is a definite correlation but I'm certainly going to be more vicious than ever at purging files.

So much of what RM have done in Net LM is excellent that it seems churlish to complain about the little things but I'm going to anyway! Net 3 has a simple utility program called Netdsk which runs at logon or logoff and checks to see if a user has exceeded their allocated amount of disc space. If this was the case then they were forced to delete files. I don't know why RM have never officially released a similar program for Net LM. I'm afraid that one of the reasons might be that they are trying to develop a better version; frankly I don't need it! I want a simple program which does exactly what Netdsk did. If the amount of free disc space is really as critical as I'm beginning to believe then we really need something to help reduce the clutter - I'd much rather encourage pupils to manage their own space than simply wipe all Paintbrush files more than 2 weeks old and Netdsk helps to do this.

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Micro Mart

For Sale:

170Mb IDE hard drive - suitable for use in any 486 S-Series computer without a hard drive; selling because it has been replaced by a bigger drive. £100 or near offer. Please contact Angela Charlton on 01883 345809 (home).

For Sale:

Mitsubishi Type 57 60Mb RLL hard drive (as used in Nimbus VX/2 about three years ago). Light home use, good working order, suitable as replacement drive or as spare.

Offers, please, to David Tee. Tel: 01484 864291 (home) or 01943 698765 (school)

Wanted:

As a fairly new member I would like to enquire if any members still have a Nimbus version of the software for the "Living with Computers" series. There were two books in the series. It was originally written by Acorn/CES but I have not been able to find out anything from them.

We made a rather dramatic change from BBCs to a Nimbus network and I do rather miss being able to use some of these simulations which my younger pupils find easy to understand.

Please contact Frances Stacey at 10 Belmont Road, Wallington, Surrey, SM6 8TB, Tel: 0181 395 2346 or at Eosten School on 01883 343386.

For Sale:

PC386/16 with 60Mb hard drive, VGA colour monitor, DOS 6, Windows 3.1 and Word for Windows 2. All manuals and original packaging. Home use only. £550 or near offer. Contact Glenn Taylor in Bristol on 0117 963 5816 (home)

For Sale:

7 x PC186 Ethernet cards, surplus to requirements (firmware not included). Best offer within a fortnight of publication secures. Contact Glenn Taylor, Nailsee School, Bristol 01275 852251.

For Sale:

12 x Link 480z stations

9 x Microvitec 452 CUB colour monitors

2 x RM MQ2 Double Disc Drives

6 x 380z computers with keyboards

plus assorted mono monitors

any offer considered

contact: Lynn Cartwright, Business Manager, Perry Common School, 395 College Road, Erdington, Birmingham B44 0HF Tel: 0121 373 1647 Fax: 0121 382 2707

For Sale:

Chain 64 480z network, 30 stations with colour monitors and mice, 2 external hard drives (100 Mb disc space), tape streamer, Access menu system plus loads of software. All cables and leads to be included. Offers in the region of £1750.

Contact Ashley Sherren, North Leamington School, Upper School, Park Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. Tel: 01926 338711

Wanted:

Identica Tape Streamer - Model 411-2202 - BR

Contact Ashley Sherren, North Leamington School, Upper School, Park Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. Tel: 01926 338711

'Problems' with new software

Peter Butt

Many *RM Users* ago the question was asked: 'How did you use parts of the software library supplied with an RM network?' to which I responded with a set of my year 7 information retrieval worksheets which used Quest and the PTABLE database. (PTABLE - the periodic table of the 92 naturally occurring elements - each record having 11 fields of chemical characteristics plus the date of discovery and discoverer.) The worksheet questions were developed in conjunction with a member of our science staff so that our lessons complemented each other's in the hope that the pupils may see some relevance to their IT lessons. Something must have rubbed off for only this morning our Head of Chemistry queried me because he was mystified by a comment from one of his middle school pupils: "We did that in Mr Butt's (IT) lessons".

Since those early days we have continued to use the PTABLE database but we have upgraded the query software from Quest to PCQUEST to Oriel. Earlier this year RM User 8:6 carried a glowing review of the database management system (DBMS) FlexiData and at the moment I am in the process of evaluating this package for our use. I would agree with the findings of the review but I have come up against an unexpected problem. My science colleague and I have sadly come to the conclusion that the PTABLE database is no longer appropriate to use. The reason for this is that FlexiData can do too much and too easily compared to our previous software. FlexiData could be used to answer all the questions on our worksheets but it would also appear to be able to 'create presentations for particular audiences, integrating more

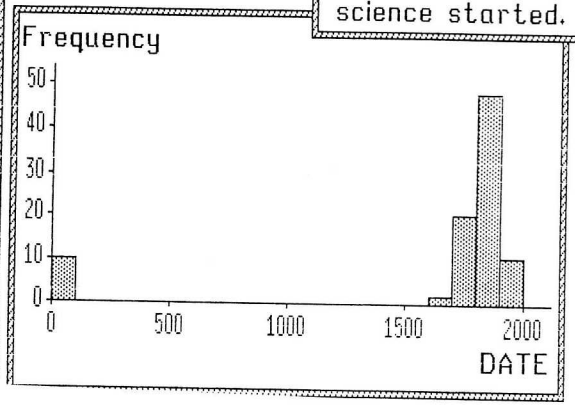
DATE	ELEMENT
1766	HYDROGEN
1895	HELIUM
1817	LITHIUM
1798	BERYLLIUM
1808	BORON
0	CARBON
1772	NITROGEN
1774	OXYGEN
1771	FLUORINE
1898	NEON
1807	SODIUM
1755	MAGNESIUM
1825	ALUMINIUM
1823	SILICON
1669	PHOSPHORUS
0	SULPHUR

92 records

DATE	
Mean	1634.5
Count	92
Minimum	0
Maximum	1945
Range	1945

The Date of Discovery of the Elements

0=ancient times
Graph indicates when modern science started.



than one form of information', which is required by the May 1994 National Curriculum Key Stage 3 IT draft proposals. Essentially, our year 7 pupils do not know enough chemistry to be able to use FlexiData at that level of sophistication. For that age group, the only meaningful topic for a presentation that we could think of was to investigate the dates of the discovery of the elements - see Figures 1 and 2 for my first attempts at integrating different types of information. Thinks: what were the reasons for chemistry 'starting in the 1600's; what were the reasons for discovering many new elements about 1800 and then in the 1880s?

We appear to have a piece of software that will enable us to implement the proposed Key Stage 3 programme of study but we come back to the real problem which is to find meaningful problems to investigate. Any suggestions for appropriate databases for my classes that can exploit the versatility of FlexiData?

Another thing that this software has brought home to me is how ephemeral are IT 'skills'. With the software that we used this year, to make the presentations as shown would have required level 9/10 ability skills, now it could be level 5/6 ability skills. Pleas note that my use of the words 'skills' which is not the same as having the required intellectual level to investigate and present any findings.

I must agree with Peter on the problem of software which almost does too much - I'm forever seeing pupils producing charts from Excel which are totally meaningless. My article on Crosstabs in Excel was prompted by watching a pupil taking a list of distances travelled by people to Kwik Save and plotting this against the distance travelled by a different group of people going to Tesco. Excel happily gives a graph but it's totally without meaning. The pupil in

Query: date > 0

DATE	ELEMENT
1766	HYDROGEN
1895	HELIUM
1817	LITHIUM
1798	BERYLLIUM
1808	BORON
1772	NITROGEN
1774	OXYGEN
1771	FLUORINE
1898	NEON
1807	SODIUM
1755	MAGNESIUM
1825	ALUMINIUM
1823	SILICON
1669	PHOSPHORUS
1774	CHLORINE

82 records

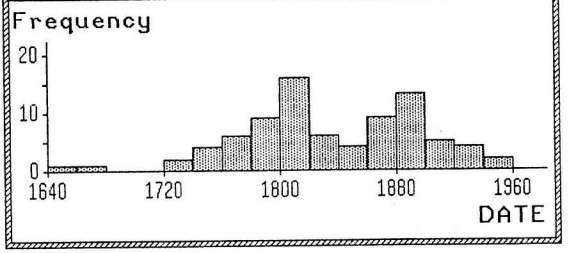
Query: date > 0

DATE

Mean	1833.8
Count	82
Minimum	1649
Maximum	1945
Range	296

The Date of Discovery of the Elements since the start of modern science

Query: date > 0



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question had the 'skill' to use Excel to draw a chart but did not have the ability to consider what he was actually showing. It's becoming increasingly important to refine IT teaching so that it doesn't just deal with skills acquisition but deals with why you use a scattergraph rather than a histogram and so on. (I'm also increasingly disturbed at the number of pupils who hand in work which looks beautiful at first glance but has no worthwhile content and is full of spelling or grammatical errors, not because the person can't spell or write but because they can't be bothered to check; it looks good, therefore, it must be good is all too prevalent a view.)

Perhaps following on from this I'd like your *thoughts on how we can assess not just skills but 'real' ability to use IT. It's very easy to devise a test to see if a pupil can search for data, plot a chart and so on - I do it regularly. How do I assess whether a pupil uses the software sensibly? I have opinions the person plotting a radar chart from data that ought to be a histogram obviously is not IT competent; the one who looks at the numbers coming from a spreadsheet and rejects them because one of the formulae is wrong might be - even thought they might not know what is wrogn they've recognised that it's wrong to uncritically accept the output from a computer. What I want to do is formalise this. Do you do any such testing? Do write or phone and let me know.*

RM Bulletin Board

Have you recently started using the bulletin board? Could you write a short article about how you got on? I'm looking for a beginner's guide to using the BBS. I think it ought to mention what software you used, how you set up your modem, how you found your way around when you logged on, what parts of it you found most useful and anything else you feel is relevant.

I've been asked by a member to publish an article on the bulletin board and I think it might be better if it were written by someone who can give the new user's point of view (I use it frequently and I now press M T D G more or less automatically to go through the menus to get the messages downloaded and so I don't really know that much about how to get started - it's too long ago!)

If you think you could do this but would like to discuss it first then do please get in touch. You can phone me (Steve Rochford) on 0181 740 5642 - leave a message if I'm not in and I will call you back.

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Your Magazine

I really do welcome items for the magazine from anyone. You don't have to be a great writer to send something in; send a letter or a short tip for the Hints and Tips pages, everything is welcome. If you want to phone and talk something over then please do; even if you aren't sure how to write something down then I can always include your ideas in Hints and Tips or as a plea for help; some of you will recognise your phone calls on the Hints and Tips pages!

I would be particularly pleased to hear from the people who are using RM computers at home; there are quite a lot of you out there. Some of you will be experienced at working with computers and I would be interested to know why you chose RM for home use. Others will have responded to RM's advertising, perhaps because your children use the same computers at school. How are you getting on with your new machine? Did you have any problems getting started? It doesn't matter if you still don't know the answer to the problem- this is how you'll find out - and it doesn't matter if you think that your problem was trivial; remember that there are many other people who are going to be in exactly the same position as you and will welcome the help that you can give.

If you are writing for me then the ideal is to send me a disc produced using Word or Word for Windows but I can cope with any word processor that runs on a PC or Nimbus (I think). If what you are sending is short then a letter on good old fashioned paper is fine. I can also accept articles left on the bulletin board - the easiest way to to do this is to prepare your article in a word processor and save it normally. You then send a short e-mail to me and attach your file to it when you are on-line. It's actually easier to do than to describe because the whole thing is menu driven.

Finally, we pay for published articles at the rate of £5 per printed page (although all payments are at the Editor's discretion).

Advertising in the Magazine

Full and half page advertisements can be placed in the magazine and details can be obtained from the Advertising Manager. We also take classified ads and members may place free ads for surplus equipment in MicroMart.

Rates

Back Cover £60 Inside Cover £50 Full Page £30 Half Page £20

These rates assume black-on-white, camera ready copy. Please avoid dot-matrix output. Typesetting is charged at cost and is additional to the above rates. Please make cheques payable to *RM User Group*

Membership Form

Please use capitals

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms .....

Job title (if appropriate) .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Postcode .....

I enclose a cheque payable to RMUG/order for £18. If you are not enclosing a cheque then please send an official order, indicating clearly to whom the invoice should be sent.

In order to serve our members better we like to know something about them and what they do with their computers. The information you give is confidential and we are registered as Data Users under the Data Protection Act.

Are you involved in education?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, with what age range do you work:

below 11 ☐ 11-18 ☐ 18+ ☐

Do you use a computer at home?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please send your form and payment to:

RMUG, FREEPOST, Esher, Surrey, KT10 0BR

You may photocopy this form if you do not wish to cut your magazine.

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flo COMPUTER SERVICES

StopIt

The Print Job Management system for RM Net LM 2

Do you get tired of watching pages printed from the laser at your budget's expense? Those days can now be over - **StopIt** prevents users from printing out unless they have sufficient credit in their printing account for each page they want to print.

You could:

- Charge for every credit
- Allocate a fixed number of credits to each user
- Use the program just to monitor print jobs and not charge.

Various options may be set - from deleting the print job if not enough credits are available (and telling the user), to allowing an unlimited overdraft. Users can see their print credit balance at logon and may check it at any time.

Technical Information

- Works with LANSpool printers and those directly connected to servers.
- Works with Postscript and HP compatible (PCL / HPGL) printers.
- Handles in excess of 7000 users.
- Supports multiple servers.
- The system requires a dedicated networked station to run on (PC186 upwards). The administration and credit check modules may be run on any Windows 3.1 station.
- The maximum number of queues which may be handled efficiently by the dedicated station depends on the speed of its processor. A PC186 is more than capable of handling two queues on a 50 station school network.
- Log files show time, date and number of credits added to users, the number of pages in each print job and also from which Windows program they were sent.

Price (Site Licence)	Secondary Schools	£349.00
	Other institutions*	£899.00

All prices include post and packing but exclude VAT at the current rate.

* Use Secondary School pricing if you have less than 1000 students on roll.

For further details, please contact us at: 14 Hutton Close, Keynsham, Bristol, BS18 1XW.
Telephone: 0272 860885 (answerphone 9am-4pm).